



Association of Directors of
Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

Environment Board

24th November 2021, 10:00-11:00

NOTES

1.	Welcome and Introductions Steve welcomed members.	
2.	Covid-19 / HGV Drivers / Blue Collar staff / supply chain and general service resilience Steve Read informed that WSCC have currently got some of the highest incidence rates of Covid-19 in the UK, highest rates are amongst school age children. There are also service impacts on social care due to redeployment of workers who don't want to get vaccinated. HGV and blue-collar staff will be covered a little later in the meeting as part of the Waste update. Other regions seem to be generally experiencing a similar picture to WSCC. Steve Palfrey reported that Suffolk had a peak a few weeks ago and now the highest number of Covid-19 cases are in the primary school age group. <u>Working Group Updates</u> Waste Steve Palfrey reported that driver shortages continue to affect Local Authorities in relation to waste and other services. Several surveys are being conducted including by LARAC on waste and Defra's wider survey covering a number of sectors including	

Waste. Defra came in for criticism as they are running surveys but not sharing the outcome. They have recognised this and will share outputs from the last survey with request to fill in the next one.

General picture is mixed... there are some regional hot spots. Somerset were hit badly when trying to progress with service change while suffering driver shortages. They are working with the DVLA and contractor to train up Loaders to become drivers. A rep from the DVLA will be attending the next Waste working group meeting on 15th Dec.

About a quarter of authorities are reporting issues in waste surveys. In areas staff trained as drivers are being deployed to core collection services. From the public perspective the reality isn't as visible as labour shortage.

There is a concern with the cold weather starting that we will see an impact as refuse drivers are also on the rota for gritters.

Colleagues were urged to fill in the surveys in order to build a good picture of what's going on and feed into government the significance of issues.

Noted that some Local Authorities are looking into incentive schemes for drivers in order to keep them. Steve Palfrey reported that a number of contractors have been in the press as offering golden handshakes to drivers and increasing pay rates. Figures of £15,000 as golden handshake were mentioned. It is believed that in Devon there was talk of staff being approached on breaks in car parks and being offered up to £50k salaries to drive for supermarkets.

Ralph Kemp, Cheshire East, informed that they are focussed on training loaders. There are 11 who are being trained and they have agreed that they will remain with Cheshire East Council for 3-5 years. It was noted that some drivers who left had now come back to the council as they found the reality of driving for supermarkets not as attractive as it seemed.

WRAP will be attending the next Waste group meeting to talk about organic road map.

Environment Act – need clarity on new burdens funding and what that might mean to LA budgets.

Persistent organic pollutions in furniture and sending to waste.

	<p>The group discussed red diesel, inflation in cost associated to waste operations and no longer being able to use it.</p> <p>An ACTION from the October meeting was for Joe to find out the latest with regards to the Waste Consultation, where we are, and measures expected.</p> <p>Joe responded to say that it is still being analysed and the results are expected to be published in early 2022.</p> <p>ACTION: Joe to follow up on obtaining department detail to share with the Board.</p> <p>ACTION: Steve P to ask Defra for further confirmation that the new burden funding will be coming.</p> <p>Liz Small informed of a discussion at the Natural Capital & Heritage working group on the new burdens and a question was raised re. the autumn settlement. Government have undertaken to provide new burden funding which is in departmental settlement in autumn statement. It was understood that it was a one-off payment for Natural Capital Strategy but is it or how long will it continue for and what is it allocated for?</p> <p>The answer given was that Capital suggests that it's a one-off contribution.</p> <p>Energy & Clean Growth</p> <p>No update provided.</p> <p>Hannah Bartram informed that the group will meet again next Monday 29th November.</p> <p>Flood and Water Management</p> <p>No update provided.</p> <p>Hannah Bartram informed that the group met recently but the notes have not yet been distributed.</p> <p>Natural Capital & Heritage</p> <p>Liz small advised that the group last met on Monday 22nd November, but the minutes are not yet published.</p> <p>Items discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Act now passed generated a lot of discussion. • Update from Planning Advisory Service on Biodiversity Net Gain. BNG training has been circulated among ADEPT members and wider. 	<p>JW</p> <p>SP</p>
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ACTION: Liz Small to send a link to the website for Board members to access.

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- Defra funded ALGE/ADEPT skills audit - waiting for final report but discussion on new burdens and how they are linked to skills and expertise is needed and is a live concern of the group.
- Discussion from Alice Lord from Queen's Green Canopy Jubilee project on dedicated ancient woodlands and trees. There was lots of discussion between Alice Lord and Liz Milne on ALGE.
- Adam Stewart spoke on Environment Act. and things in the Act that need to be delivered in 2 years e.g. BNG and LNRS. Lots of statutory guidance coming out and hopefully a response to the Glover Consultation coming out soon. The impression was that allocation to Defra was better than expected in the Autumn Statement. Adam pointed to the data chapter in the Environment Act and what to cover off there.
- Dasgupta Review and the importance to use it to underpin environmental action and funding bids.
- Brief reflection on COP 26.
- Discussion on Net zero information that has come out.
- Next meeting is in Jan – hot topics will be BNG, LNRS, new Burdens funding and more discussion on regulation and secondary guidance coming out.

David Dale raised 2 points:

- 1) LNRS responsible authorities – colleagues from Defra repeat the mantra “no gaps/no overlaps”. For 2-tier areas with no unitaries it is clear where it will be, but other parts are still up for discussion.
- 2) Following the short discussion at end of meeting on Monday's working group meeting to do with ecologists and tree planting, it was interesting to hear councils saying how hot the market is for tree planting staff. Some large rural estates are getting environment investment plans together and gearing up to recruit staff from LAs for tree planting. The impact of ELMS and changeover was noted and that fact that community forests are struggling to buy land. Nobody knows the value of agricultural land. It is an uncertain market at the moment.

Defra

Joe Wahla reported that:

1. The “world-leading” Environment Act 2021 became law on the 9th of November 2021 and can be viewed [here](#).
2. Following the passing of the Act, the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) was legally formed on 17 November. More information [here](#).

3. Implementation activity will pick up in 2022, with further consultations, guidance, and Statutory Instruments (SIs) being laid to implement primary legislation.
4. We are still analysing the responses to the waste consultations and making key policy decisions. We expect to publish a full government response to these consultations in early 2022.
5. On the 28th October Defra published a policy paper on the Greening Government Commitments from 2021 to 2025. It sets out the actions government departments and their agencies will take to reduce their impacts on the environment in that period, including targets around reducing water consumption, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, minimising waste, and promoting resource efficiency. You can read the paper [here](#).
6. On the 2nd of November the government announced its participation in The Global Forest Finance Pledge (GFFP), as part of the COP26 conference. The press release can be found [here](#).
7. On the 3rd of November the Trees Call to Action Fund, part of the Nature for Climate Fund, opened for expressions of interest. The press release can be found [here](#).
8. The Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) grant opened on the 10th of November. More info can be found [here](#). The draft Environment Act Frequently Asked Questions is undergoing some final revisions before it will be shared with ADEPT for feedback shortly.
9. In addition, Defra are working on a proposal to provide further support to local authorities on the Environment Act 2021 by running a series of virtual roadshows early next year. Defra will approach ADEPT and LGA for discussion on this shortly.

ACTION: Joe Wahla to feed back to Defra again re. the short deadlines for local government to act on national government agenda.

JW

David Dale thanked Joe for putting him in touch with the Green Finance team and will continue to plug messages for bidding. Would be good to have one-stop-shop to find out about all funding opportunities for green and blue infrastructure.

Environment Agency

Julie Foley reported that the Climate Change Adaptation Report was published on 13th October. It received a lot of coverage with “adapt and survival” headlines and climate reality checks.

Natural Flood Management pilot – learnings published on 1st November. Got great case studies of natural flood management and also digital guidance.

Flood Risk Management Plans – mid-way through public

consultation which went out on 22nd October alongside River Basin Management Plans. Closing mid-January 2022.

Flood Action Week launched this week as we head into winter. Caroline Douglas has been doing media around that giving messages to check flood warnings and giving a better digital service. We are led on general messages on preparing, acting, and surviving.

Hannah Bartram has been working with colleagues to set up a meeting on 5th January 2022 to discuss some priority projects on flood investment on capital programme. Councils taking projects forward that are on their capital programme. David Dale noted the important labour shortages, driver shortages, rising costs with manufacturers and it would be useful to get corporate partner attendance at this meeting. Hannah acknowledged delays in delivery impacting across all major projects and informed there will be case studies at the meeting. Hannah has written to Place Directors of 17/18 authorities with top spend of flood management projects. All but one has responded. Nigel Riglar and also flood and management group.

ACTION: Hannah to discuss with Julie on how to get corporate attendance at meeting on 5th January.

Julie shared the interesting snippet that the Thames Barrier had 200th closure on 21st Oct when it was closed due to a flood risk. Also noted the 1st closure of the new Boston barrier on 7th November. Steve Read asked whether the Thames Barrier closures had been accelerating in frequency over the forty or so years it has been in place? Julie responded to inform that 2012/2013 was a mega year for South East flooding with highest number of closures. Max number of closures modelled in a year is 50. With climate change closures are expected to increase in coming years and there's talk of a Thames Barrier 2 with continuing maintenance of the original one.

Natural England

No update provided.

Other Issues, Risks and Questions

Nothing raised.

ADEPT

- Steve Read congratulated Hannah Bartram on a good ADEPT Autumn Conference. Hannah informed it went well with lots of great feedback. There was a fantastic range of speakers. The conference was attended by the same number of people as in 2019 which was fantastic.
- Live Labs Expo for highways innovation projects for DfT is being held in Derby next week. It has environment components –

HB

	<p>connected energy, solar power etc. A couple of those projects went into the world of adult social care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADEPT LT have discussed the levelling up agenda and a letter was written and sent to Mr Gove at DLUHC. Waiting for follow-up and waiting to meet with Neil O'Brien. • ADEPT LT meeting next week will be hearing back from Shared Intelligence and how the Association is viewed by members. • ADEPT is going to become a company. A consultation period is happening at the moment. The company is Limited by guarantee (no shareholders), a non-profit making organisation. Members shouldn't see any difference. • Glover Review – There is a meeting tomorrow, 25th November, for an update with a group of authorities who have been involved in conversation over the last few months. • OEP Roundtable – strategy, enforcement and 25YEP monitoring report. Had a good conversation yesterday at this workshop with the OEP, with a dozen or so LAs represented. • Currently calling for EOI on the Leadership Development Programme. Will be with Solace. If interested there's a flyer on website. Deadline is 7th January. 	
3.	<p>Agenda for 26th January 2022 (quarterly meeting)</p> <p>David Dale is pulling together the agenda for January. Some items being considered are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Grid to present the ADEPT / ESO Consumer and Local Authority research • Implementation of LNRS • Defra's Nature Green Paper • Next steps on climate change resilience and adaptation. • How ADEPT is addressing climate change <p>ACTION: Please forward any other ideas to David Dale and Steve Read.</p>	ALL
4.	<p>Any other urgent business</p> <p>None reported.</p>	
5.	<p>Dates of future meetings/calls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future of monthly catch-ups 	

	ACTION: Tracey to run a poll via e-mail on the future of monthly catch-ups.	TB
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